

## JAPANESE AMERICANS

### 1. Generations, Immigration and Length of U.S. Residency

Japanese Americans may be classified into several social categories based upon their immigration, nativity, and generation history. These categories are:

*a. Isseis.* These are the first generation of Japanese who immigrated here at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Most of these people have passed on although a few remain. The Isseis were culturally Japanese.

*b. Niseis* (second generation). These were the descendants of the Isseis. They are American born and ethnically marginal between being American and Japanese (but really more American).

*c. Sanseis* (third generation), *yonseis* (fourth generation), *goseis* (fifth generation), etc. These are descendants of the original Isseis so many generations removed and most have little contact with Japanese culture and language. They have pretty much assimilated into American society.

*d. Shin Isseis* (new first generation). These are Japanese who immigrated to America after World War II. From 1924 until 1952 immigration from Japan was prohibited so this is the first generation of Japanese who came after WWII and are ethnically Japanese.

There are others in the Japanese American population like Japanese businessmen and their families from Japan along with Japanese students. There are also significant numbers of Japanese married to Americans.

### 2. Family and Children

The original immigrants from Japan brought with them a strong sense of family and commitment to their children's welfare. Coming from a country heavily influenced by Confucian values, emphasis on the family was always central. The family was seen as the major social unit and survival weapon against a hostile world. Strong emphasis is put on family ties. Family continuity was strongly emphasized and children (especially the sons) were regarded as the carriers of the family name. Fierce hostilities against the Japanese before WWII maintained the view that children should be well educated and disciplined to adapt to this hostile world. These views have prevailed throughout the history of the Japanese Americans and were the major factors for how they were able to rise from humble beginnings into the main stream of American society. Family is still highly valued but maintaining family ties does not have that strong sense of urgency it once had. Divorce rates have been traditionally low but has been increasing in recent years.

### 3. Language

The original immigrants - the Isseis - spoke only Japanese. The Niseis spoke English but were familiar with Japanese in order to communicate with their parents. In the tightly knit Japanese communities of pre-World War II, speaking Japanese was considered very important and most Niseis were sent to Japanese language schools. With the decline of this tightly knit community and the passing on of the Isseis, Japanese is rarely spoken or known among younger Japanese Americans. Those who do speak Japanese are mostly recent arrivals.

#### **4. Religion and Spiritually**

Historically, religion in the American sense of Sunday School attendance, belief in a single faith, relative intolerance of other faiths, is alien to the Japanese. In general they are tolerant of all theologies and have not institutionalized religion to the extent that most Americans have. This does not mean they are not religious but very flexible and more pragmatic about religious views. It was not unusual for a person to be both Buddhist and Christian. Most of the original immigrants were Buddhists or Shinto but substantial numbers became Christians partly out of feelings that being such would better help them in adapting to American society. All of the major religious groups are now represented in the Japanese American community from Buddhists to the major denominations of the Protestant church and Catholics. With the greater integration and their dispersal out of their ghetto like “little Tokyo’s;” the Japanese American churches have still managed to survive but after undergoing significant changes. For example, Buddhist and Shinto temples now have taken on the characteristics of Western churches - they have Sunday services, Sunday schools, etc. Most important, churches have become the focal points and major avenues for any kind of community involvement. They offer a variety of social services and are frequent rallying points for social and political action.

#### **5. Manners, Customs, Etiquette, Gestures and Taboos**

Many if not most of the manners, customs, etc. which the original immigrants displayed have been abandoned or changed. While recent generations of Japanese Americans are taking on the mannerisms, habits of other middle class Americans, one can still detect certain common -characteristics.,

- An emphasis on appropriate manners - eating habits, courtesy, dress.
- Discouragement of being confrontational - not making waves
- Modesty - bragging is looked down upon
- Avoidance of eye contact, a characteristic still common among younger Japanese Americans.
- Strong respect for elders and authority

#### **6. Cultural Ideals**

Cultural ideals too have undergone significant changes from those that the original immigrants brought from Japan. The Japanese like other Asians were deeply influenced by Confucianism and this is reflected in their cultural ideals and practices. In a way, these ideals and practices were quite compatible with American middle class values and quite consistent with the ideals of traditional Protestantism:

- Emphasis on hard work and discipline
- Emphasis on delayed gratification -- sacrifice now for the future
- Respect for authority
- Monetary success and social mobility are very important -- pursue the American Dream.

## **7. Social Interaction and Relationships**

Norms which guide present day interaction among Japanese American have their roots \*in Japanese culture. The Japanese have always been more group sensitive than Westerners. When interacting with others they are always aware of the social context in which they are interacting -the social status of the person they are interacting with, their age, gender, etc. Traditional Japanese language patterns differed depending upon the status of the actors. This sensitivity still prevails but is less pervasive but Japanese Americans are more group conscious and pragmatic about preserving group ties. They will adapt new practices if it helps preserve the integrity of the group. This group awareness means that conformity to group norms is very strong. The way a person behaves is strongly influenced by what he/she feels others think about his/her behavior In contrast to Western people who more likely to express their opinions openly in an assertive manner, Japanese tend to speak and act only after due consideration has been given to the other person's feelings and point of view. Furthermore, there is a habit of not giving a clear-cut yes or no answer.

Younger Japanese Americans (like their contemporaries in Japan) are less sensitive to group pressure but they are still more reserved and passive. Indeed, many professionals (teachers, social workers, lawyers, etc.) working with them have to make a concerted effort to insure that they are expressing their true feelings.

## **8. The Role of the Library**

The library could assist Japanese Americans in bridging their two cultures of Japanese and American in several ways. First of all, the library could assist those who are coming to grips with their ethnic identity by helping them discover who they are. Materials could be provided to help them better understand where they came and educational programs to discover and appreciate their cultural roots. These programs would be especially helpful to the younger Japanese Americans who are generations removed from the Japanese culture of their ancestors. Since most cannot read or speak Japanese, information must be available for them in English - books audio and video tapes on Japanese culture, the Japanese American experience.

Secondly, the library could assist those recent arrivals to better adapt to American ways. Since many of these people are limited in their English abilities, information should be available in their native Japanese. As recent arrivals, many are not familiar and ignorant of American customs and they often have very little help. It is especially important that the assistance provided by the library goes beyond just information about getting by from day to day. The Japanese come from a homogeneous society and they have little knowledge about what it is like to live in a diverse society. They are often ignorant about other racial and ethnic groups and have no understanding of issues like gender rights. Their lack of knowledge on these matters has often led others to regard them as racist or sexist. Programs to educate them on how to live humanely in America would be something the library might be of great assistance.

JAPANESE EXPRESSIONS FOR LIBRARY USE

- |   |                        |  |
|---|------------------------|--|
| 1. How are you?                             | いかがですか？                | Ikagadesuka?                                       |
| 2. Can I help you?                          | 何か御必要ですか？              | Nanika<br>goshitsuyodesuka?                        |
| 3. Wait a moment, please.                   | ちょっとお待ち下さい。            | Chotto<br>omachikudasai.                           |
| 4. Do you have<br>a library card?           | ライブラリーカードを<br>お持ちですか？  | Library card wo<br>omochidesuka?                   |
| 5. What's your name?                        | お名前は？                  | Onāmae wa?   |
| 6. What's your last name?                   | 苗字は何ですか？               | Myoji wa nandesuka?                                |
| 7. Please return the books<br>by this date. | この日までに本を<br>お返してください。  | Kono hi made ni<br>hon wo okaeshi-<br>kudasai.     |
| 8. Some books are<br>overdue.               | 返却されていない<br>本があります。    | Henkyakusarete inai<br>hon ga arimasu.             |
| 9. I'm sorry.<br>There is a fine.           | すみませんが、<br>返却滞納金がつきます。 | Sumimasenga,<br>henkyaku tainokin ga<br>tsukimasu. |
| 10. Ask the librarian.                      | 司書にきいて下さい。             | Shisho ni<br>kiitekudasai.                         |
| 11. Everything is fine.                     | 問題ありません。               | Mondai arimasen.                                   |
| 12. Thank you.                              | ありがとう。                 | Arigato.   |
| 13. You are welcome                         | どういたしまして。              | Do itashimashite.                                  |

- |                       |         |              |
|-----------------------|---------|--------------|
| 14. Excuse me.        | すみませんが。 | Sumimasenga. |
| 15. Good bye.         | さようなら。  | Sayonara.    |
| 16. Please come back. | またどうぞ。  | Mata dozo.   |

## CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

### National Holidays:

Jan. 1: New Year's Day (Ganjitsu) People go out to shrines or temples to pay their respects to their ancestors and to pray for their safety and good luck. And people visit their relatives and friends to exchange New Year's greetings during the early part of January.

Jan. 15: Adult's Day (Seijin no Hi) To honor young people who have reached 20 years old, voting age. Most cities and towns sponsor ceremonies on this day.

Feb. 11: National Foundation Day (Kenkoku Kinenbi) To celebrate accession to the throne of the first emperor Jimmu.

Mar. 21: Vernal Equinox Day (Shunbun no Hi) To celebrate the coming of spring. People visit ancestral graves.

Apr. 29: Greenery Day (Midori no Hi) Tree-Planting campaign prevails.

May 3: Constitution Memorial Day (Kenpo Kinenbi) To commemorate promulgation of Japan's new peace constitution, a postwar creation.

May 4: People's Holiday (Kokumin no Shukujitsu)

May 5: Children's Day (Kodomo no Hi) Formerly called Boy's Day. To celebrate growth of children in good health.

Sep. 15: Respect for the Aged Day (Keiro no Hi) Celebrations are held for the aged people.

Sept. 23: Autumnal Equinox Day (Shubun no Hi) To celebrate the first day of autumn and to venerate one's ancestors.

Oct. 10: Health-Sports Day (Taiiku no Hi) To encourage the people to enjoy sports, thus building up healthy life.

Nov. 3: Culture Day (Bunka no Hi) To encourage the people to love peace, freedom and culture.

Nov. 23: Labor Thanksgiving Day (Kinro Kansha no Hi) Frequently combined with celebrations of a good harvest in the country-side.

Dec. 23: Emperor's Birthday (Tenno Tanjobi) The Imperial Palace will be opened to the public.

### Festivals:

Jan. 6: New Year's Parade of Firemen at Harumi, Tokyo

Feb. 1-5: Snow Festival at Sapporo, Hokkaido.

Feb. 3 or 4: Setsubun or Bean-Throwing Ceremony

Feb. 8: Koto-Hajime refers to the beginning of all the year's works nationwide.

Mar. 3: Hinamatsuri or Dolls Festival for girls

Apr. 1-30: Miyako Odori (Cherry Dance) at Gion, Kyoto

Apr. 8: Hana Matsuri or the Flower Festival celebrates the birthday of Buddha.

May 3-4: Dontaku in Hakata, Fukuoka

May 11-Oct. 15: Cormorant Fishing on the Nagara River, Gifu.

May 15: Aoi Matsuri or Hollyhock Festival, Kyoto  
May 16-18: Black Ship (Com. Perry's) Festival celebrates arrival of ship in Shimoda Port.

May 16-18: Sanja Festival of Asakusa Shrine, Tokyo

May 17-18: Grand Festival of Toshogu Shrine, Nikko

Jun. 14: Rice-Planting Festival at Sumiyoshi Shrine, Osaka

Jul. 1: Opening of the climbing season, Fujimiya City, Mt. Fuji

Jul. 1-15: Hakata Yamagasa (floats), Fukuoka

Jul. 13-16: O-bon Matsuri celebrates the arrival and departure of ancestors souls in this world.  
Jul. 16-17: Gion Festival of Yasaka Shrine, Kyoto  
Jul. 24-25: Tenjin Festival of Tenmangu Shrine. Osaka  
Aug. 1-7: Nebuta at Hirosaki & Aug. 3-7 Nebuta at Aomori  
Aug. 5-7: Kanto-Balancing Festival, Akita  
Aug. 6-8: Tanabata or Star Festival, Sendai  
Aug. 15: Moon viewing and Tug-of-War festivals around the country.  
Aug. 15-18: Awa Odori Dance. Tokushima.  
Aug 16: Great Bonfire on Mt. Myoigadake, Kyoto  
Sept. 15-16: Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine Festival, Kamakura.  
Oct. 7-9: Okunchi Festival of Suwa Shrine, Nagasaki  
Oct. 9- 10: Takayama Festival, Takayama, Gifu  
Oct. 11 - 13: Oeshiki Festival of Honmonji Temple, Tokyo  
Oct. 17: Autumn Festival of Toshogu Shrine, Nikko  
Oct. 22: Jidai Matsuri or Festival of Eras, Kyoto  
Nov. 3: Feudal Lord's Procession, Hakone  
Nov. 15: Shichi-go-san or Children's Shrine Visiting Day  
Nov. 23: Niiname or Rice-Pounding Festival.  
Dec. 17: On-Matsuri of Kasuga Shrine, Nara  
Mid-Dec: Toshi-no-ichi or Year-end Market at Asakusa Kannon Temple, Tokyo.

## POPULAR AUTHORS

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|------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1、赤川次郎           | Akagawa, Jiro        | 36、夏目漱石   | Natsume, Soseki    |
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### The East

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Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052, Japan  
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P.O. Box 591360  
San Francisco, CA 94159-1360  
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Fax: (03) 3224-3754 (Tokyo's Office)  
U.S. Subscription Office's Tel & Fax Numbers are Unknown.

### Hiragana Times

(Publishing)  
YAC Planning Inc.  
Kowa Bldg. 4F, 2-3-12 Shinjuku  
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0022

(Editorial Dept.)  
Tel: 03-3341-8989  
Fax: 03-3341-8987

### Japan Echo

Moto Akasaka Bldg., 1-7- 10 Moto Akasaka  
Minato-ku, Tokyo 107, Japan  
Tel: (03) 3470-5031  
Fax: (03) 3470-5410

### Japan Times Weekly International Edition

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Fax: 078-232-4518

Tokyo Journal

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Chuo-ku, Tokyo 103-0014  
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Fax: 3667-9646

## ☆Ethnic Media Resources☆

### 1、テレフォン ガイド

The Japanese Business Directory & Guide

S.F. Japan Publicity, Inc. 1721 Rogers Ave., #Q, San Jose, CA 95112

### 2、日系職業別電話張

A Japanese Telephone and Reference Directory 1998

Pacific Mediart Productions 1581 Webster St., Suit 110, S. F., 94115

### 3、イエローページ ジャパン

Yellow Pages Japan in U. S. A.: A Directory of Jpannese Businesses in the U. S. Covering 25 Major Metropolitan Areas.

Yellow Pages Japan, Inc. 420 Boyd St., Ste. 502. Los Angeles, CA 90013

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Asian American Resources

<http://www.mit.edu:8001/afs/athena.mit.edu/user/i/r/irie/www/aar.html>

Consulate General of Japan—San Francisco

<http://www.infojapan.com/cgjsf>

Japanese American Network

<http://www.janet.org>

Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)

<http://www.jetro.go.jp>

Kinokuniya

<http://www.kinokuniya.co.jp>

## PEOPLE RESOURCES

Asawa, Edward E.  
Library Consultant  
Franklin D. Murphy Library  
Japanese American Cultural and Community Center  
244 S. San Pedro St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
213-628-2725 ext. 125

Fujimoto, Seiko  
Japanese Benevolent Society of California  
1832 Buchanan St., #216  
San Francisco, CA 94115  
415-771-3440

Japan Information Center  
Consulate General of Japan  
50 Fremont St., 22nd Fl.  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
415-777-3533

Japanese Culture and Community Center of Northern California  
1840 Sutter St.  
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1619 Sutter St.  
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San Francisco, CA 94102  
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Japanese American History Archives  
1840 Sutter St.  
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1840 Sutter Street  
San Francisco, CA 94115

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Japanese Consulate General of Japan  
50 Fremont Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105

Japan External Trade Organization  
360 Post Street  
San Francisco, CA 94108

Asian Art Museum of San Francisco  
Golden Gate Park  
San Francisco, CA 94118

Japanese American Citizens League  
San Francisco Chapter  
4205 22nd Street  
San Francisco, CA 94118

Japan Society of Northern California  
312 Sutter Street  
Suite 410  
San Francisco, CA 94114

San Mateo Library  
55 W. 3rd Avenue  
San Mateo, CA 94403

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3501 Civic Center Drive  
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Berkeley, CA 94720

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